

HISTORY OF THE CONSOLIDATED GAS ELECTRIC
LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY OF BALTIMORE

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HISTORY OF THE CONSOLIDATED GAS ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER
COMPANY OF BALTIMORE.

ORIGIN OF THE COMPANY

The Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company is, as its name indicates, an organization resulting from the merging of several smaller companies. These companies date from the year 1816 when the first gas company in the United States was organized in Baltimore.

In 1816 Rembrandt Peale was the proprietor of a museum in Baltimore where scientific novelties were displayed. As an additional curiosity Mr. Peale installed a system of the then unknown gas lights, with which to illuminate his museum. This display attracted many visitors and caused much favorable comment. Encouraged by the reception the gas lights had received, Peale applied to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for permission to organize a company to lay pipes in the streets and light the city by means of gas. His proposition was favorably received by the Mayor and Council and in a very short time an ordinance was passed which authorized Peale and his associates to form the "Gas Light Company of Baltimore" and to contract for lighting the city with gas. Thus was formed the first gas company in the United States, and from this simple beginning has developed the great Consolidated

Company of to-day.

The gas manufactured by this first company was coal gas. It was made by burning coal in cast-iron retorts, the gas being driven off and conducted away from the retort by a pipe. It was then cooled and stored in gas holders. This gas was used exclusively for over 50 years, or until the introduction of water gas.

The Gas Light Company continued to operate, without competition, until 1871 when the "People's Gas Company" was formed. This company also manufactured coal gas.

In 1873 patents were granted to Professor Thaddeus Lowe on his process for making water gas, and in 1874 the first water gas plant was installed at Phoenixville, Pa. In a short time plants were also erected in several other places. These plants proved so successful that in 1876 the "Consumers' Mutual Gas Light Company" was organized in Baltimore for the purpose of introducing the new gas. In 1877 the plant was completed and distribution begun. Professor Henry Wurtz of Hoboken, N.J., an eminent chemist, was asked to investigate and report upon the quality and characteristics of the water gas. In his report the statement is made, as follows:

"I have no hesitation in pronouncing this to be the cleanest gas that has come within my observation, this observation having been very extensive."

The water gas was made by passing steam over anthracite coal, heated to incandescence. In order to make

the gas burn with a luminous flame it was mixed with vaporized oil. It proved to be so much cleaner and cheaper than coal gas that the plant erected by the Consumers' Company continued in operation until 1904 when it was closed down.

There were then three gas companies operating in a city which afforded barely enough business for one company. To prevent the inevitable rate wars and consequent poor service the companies combined in 1880 to form the first "Consolidated Gas Company of Baltimore."

In 1882 another competitor, the "Equitable Gas Light Company", entered the field. It at first produced a gas made by distilling wood, but later changed to water gas. After a short time a coal gas plant was added. The life of the Equitable Company was short, as in 1885 it was absorbed by the newly organized "Chesapeake Gas Company" which made water gas by a new process which was supposed to reduce the quantity of carbon monoxide in the gas.

In 1888 this company and the old Consolidated Company were merged to form a new Consolidated Gas Company which is to-day the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company.

This merger ended competition in the gas industry in the city of Baltimore as no more gas companies were organized and the legislature has since passed a law prohibiting any more competition in Baltimore.

Soon after water gas had made its appearance

electric lights began to compete with the gas lights and in 1881 the first Baltimore electric light company was formed. This was the "Brush Electric Light Company", named after the inventor of the Brush series arc-lamp system.

As was the case with the gas industry, competition was encouraged and in 1889 the first competitor appeared, followed in rapid succession by several others, none having other than a transitory existence. In 1899 all existing electric light companies were consolidated to form the "United Electric Light and Power Company." This company operated for several years without competition, and during this period service was good and rates were lower than in many other cities of the same size. In 1904 a new company entered the field and struggled along for a short period during which there occurred a disastrous rate war, which unsettled the electric light and power business, crippling progress and impairing service.

In 1906 the Consolidated Gas Company absorbed all the existing electric companies and a small gas plant operated by the Suburban Gas Company at Highlandtown, thus forming the "Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company." Since 1906 there have been no more gas or electric companies and the Consolidated Company has been free to develop its equipment and improve its service. The tremendous progress the company has made since its formation in 1906 is described in the article following.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPANY'S EQUIPMENT.

The first equipment used by the company was the old gas plant in back of Peale's Museum. In this building was made the first gas ever used for lighting in Baltimore, that which illuminated the curios on display in the old museum. After the organization of the Gas Light Company the "Davis Street Works" were built at Saratoga and North Streets. The gas holders were located inside of the building and the tanks containing the holders were built of wooden staves held together with heavy iron hoops. The largest of these holders had a capacity of 85000 cubic feet. This plant was used until 1847 when a new plant was erected at North Holliday Street, between Saratoga and Pleasant Streets, having a capacity of 275,000 cubic feet, over three times as much as the largest holder previously used. This plant operated until 1856. The year before this plant was closed the Gas Light Company erected a new plant at Spring Gardens, and this is still in use to-day. The next competing company, the People's Gas Company, constructed a coal gas plant at the foot of Scott Street, having a capacity of 1,000,000 cubic feet.

With the introduction of water gas in 1877 by the Consumers' Mutual Gas Light Company a new plant was constructed at Lancaster Street and Harris Creek, in Canton. At the start its capacity was 1,000,000 cubic feet, but four years

later the capacity was increased to 2,000,000 cubic feet, showing the great popularity of the new gas.

In 1882 the Equitable Gas Light Company erected a plant at Severn and Bayard Streets of about 1,000,000 cubic feet capacity. This plant was originally used for producing wood gas but it was later altered to produce water gas. The equipment was later augmented by a coal gas plant which was used when the water gas plant was unable to produce a sufficient quantity. This property was taken over, in 1885, by the Chesapeake Gas Company and the plant operated as before except that limestone was substituted for fire brick, with the intention of reducing the quantity of carbon monoxide in the water gas. The company did not add anything to the existing apparatus.

The plant of the Suburban Gas Company, at Highlandtown, was relatively small, having a capacity of only 100,000 cubic feet.

When the Consolidated Gas Company was formed in 1888 the new company continued to use the plant of the Chesapeake Company at Bayard and Severn Streets, the old plant at Canton once owned by the Consumer's Mutual, and the plant at Spring Gardens which was built by the original Gas Light Company and which had been in use since 1855. In 1902 an improved water gas apparatus was installed at the Spring Gardens Plant and shortly thereafter all other plants were closed down.

Since that date additional apparatus has been added and to-day the plant is a complete and modern water gas works,

having a capacity of over 50,000,000 cubic feet. Also, there is still sufficient room to allow an increase in capacity to at least twice the present capacity, should such an increase become necessary. The entire Spring Gardens Plant covers about 57 acres and includes 61 structures.

In order to provide for future expansion a piece of land, near Turner's Station in the eastern suburbs, has been purchased for use as a site for a second gas manufacturing plant when the development at Spring Gardens is completed. It is 52 acres in extent and has a deep-water frontage of 1200 feet.

While all the gas manufactured by the company is made at Spring Gardens, an additional supply of coke-oven or by-product gas is received at the Spring Gardens Plant thru a pipe line from the Maryland Steel Company, at Sparrows Point. The pipe line is $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length and passes over Bear Creek, which is 3700 feet wide. Part of this line, which is 24 inches in diameter, is laid on the bottom of the creek. At Spring Gardens this by-product gas, better known as coal gas, is purified and mixed with water gas before being distributed to the consumers.

The distribution system now covers 120 square miles, with 1089 feet of mains, of which the largest is 4 feet in diameter. This distribution system was partly made up of the trunk mains formerly used by other companies. These have been woven into the present distribution system.

The company maintains several gas distribution stations, among which are the Front Street Station in the center of the city, the Arlington Station at the Western Maryland Railroad, the Bayard Street Station in the southwest district, the Canton Station, and a few others of less importance.

The electrical equipment obtained by the company in 1906 when it absorbed a number of small electric companies consisted of several small steam power generating stations, most of which were inefficient and unreliable. In 1908, Mr. Herbert A. Wagner came to Baltimore to take charge of the electric operations of the Consolidated Company. His first work was to shut down all these small plants and concentrate the company's electric power in one plant. This was done by developing the Westport Steam Generating Station until it could supply as much power as the consumers needed. The result of this change was a decrease in operating expenses and a corresponding rate reduction. The decrease in rates produced an increase in the demand for power.

At this time the McCall's Ferry Power Company, which was constructing a plant at Holtwood, Pa. to use the Susquehanna River to generate power, went into the hands of a receiver. Mr. J. E. Aldred was appointed by the court to act as receiver and in this capacity he completed the construction of the plant at Holtwood, Pa., and organized the Pennsylvania Water and Power Company. At the same time Mr. Aldred and his associates bought a controlling interest in the Con-

solidated Company of Baltimore. His next step was to bring the power from the river plant to a substation at Highlandtown in East Baltimore and from there to the system supplied by the Westport Steam Plant of the Consolidated Company. This work was completed in 1910 and furnished a combined capacity of 92,000 horsepower.

In 1921 the Consolidated Company purchased the output of the Pratt Street Plant of the United Railways and Electric Company, thus increasing the total capacity. The capacity of the Westport Plant has been increased from about 50,000 horsepower when completed to a total of about 247,000 horsepower. The capacity of the hydro-electric plant at Holtwood has grown from about 60,000 horsepower to more than 180,000 horsepower. This increase in power at Holtwood was partly due to the erection of a steam station with a capacity of 30,000 horsepower, to operate in conjunction with the hydro-electric plant which has a capacity of 150,000 horsepower. The company's total output previous to December, 1926 was about 427,000 horsepower, an increase since 1910 of about $4\frac{2}{3}$ times the 1910 output.

In December of 1926 the new Gould Street Power Station was put into operation. At present only one unit is in use but when the station is completed it will represent an investment of \$10,000,000 and will have a capacity of 213,000 horsepower. This will increase the company's total capacity to 640,000 horsepower.

The power from the Holtwood plant is transmitted over 40 miles of double steel tower line, at 70,000 volts, to a

substation at Highlandtown where it is stepped down to 13200 volts and distributed to other substations. At the McClellan Street substation the voltage is still further reduced and transformed by rotary converters to direct current which supplies the business district. In the business portion of the city, service is further insured by one of the largest storage batteries ever built. At Monument and Constitution Streets a large substation supplies energy at 13200 volts to four different classes of service, including the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and other large consumers having their own substations. The Consolidated Company also has a number of other substations distributed through the city, some of which are equipped to supply direct current.

GAS RATES AND SERVICE

The history of the gas rates used by the Consolidated Company may be divided into three principal periods.

The first period began with the establishment of the industry when gas was charged for at a flat price per burner per month. Burners were supplied to consumers in three sizes, 12, 14, and 18 dollar burners. If a customer wished to pay \$12 per quarter (three months) for his gas he was given a \$12 burner. If he wished to pay more he was supplied with one of the larger sizes. Gas was then sold at \$4 per thousand cubic feet, with a discount of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for cash.

The second period began with the installation of gas meters, when straight meter rates were adopted. The rates varied at times with the amount of monthly consumption by the customer. This period covers the entire history of gas rates until January 1, 1916. In 1868 gas had been reduced to \$3.55 per thousand cubic feet, this price including the government tax of 25 cents and subject to a discount of 1/11 if paid within 20 days. In 1878 the introduction of water gas caused the price to drop to \$1.90 per thousand cubic feet. From that time to the present the price has been reduced several times and has finally reached the present rate of 85 cents per thousand cubic feet.

The third period began in 1916 with the adoption by the Consolidated Company of the principle of differential rates. By this new rate standard the consumers are charged a certain amount per thousand cubic feet until the consumption reaches a definite maximum. For any gas consumption above this maximum a different and lower rate is charged. The result of this lower rate for excess use of gas was a decided increase in gas consumption. Industrial concerns, during the first year of differential rates, showed a monthly increase of as high as 60 per cent. and many ordinary consumers used some gas at the lower rate.

The purpose behind this development in fixing gas rates is expressed by Mr. Aldred, the chairman of the board of directors of the Consolidated Company, in a statement made to the Public Service Commission: "The policy of the Consolidated

Company and its management has been the fixed policy of reducing rates as fast as is consistent with maintaining the company's credit on the high basis necessary for it to obtain capital at low rates." Also, President Wagner says: "The new gas rates give to the people of Baltimore a gas service which for low cost, uniformity of quality and pressure, and dependability and adequacy of supply has never been equalled in any community."

The statements of these two officials are supported by the fact that the Consolidated Company, from the beginning, has always maintained its price level as low as conditions would permit. Also, for 100 years there has never been any failure in the supply of gas, even during the great Baltimore fire of 1904 when thousands of service mains were broken by falling buildings. At the time of the fire only the Spring Gardens plant was in operation. The Bayard Street and Canton plants had been closed down a short time before. In order to compensate for the large amount of gas lost from broken mains the Canton station was again put in operation. In this way the city received an ample supply of gas during the fire, when nearly all other services were interrupted. In addition to the fire there have been numerous other emergencies, such as the blizzard in 1899 and the anthracite coal strike in 1902.

CONCLUSION.

Since the control of the Consolidated Company was taken over by Mr. J. E. Aldred and his associates, who are still at its head, the growth of the company has been phenomenal and its expansion is by no means completed. Under their able management the Consolidated Company has become one of the greatest organizations of its kind in the country.

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Edward S. Thompson.

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Old Engine Room—Holliday St. Works.



Old Retort House — Holliday St. Works.
now used as an Ice Plant. Retort House Chimney in rear of building



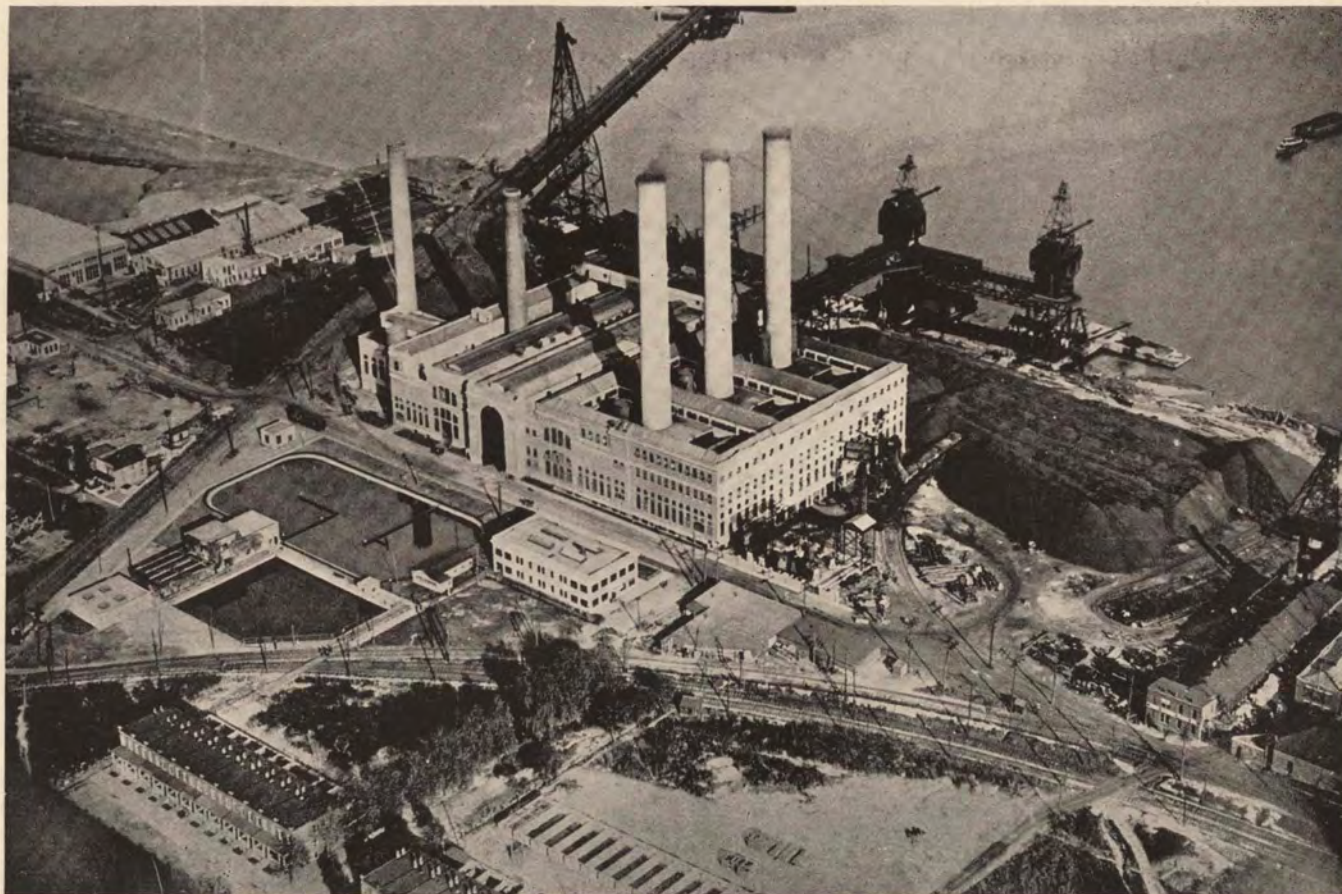
Old Purifying House—Holliday St. Works.



Old Retort House Chimney
Holliday St. Works.

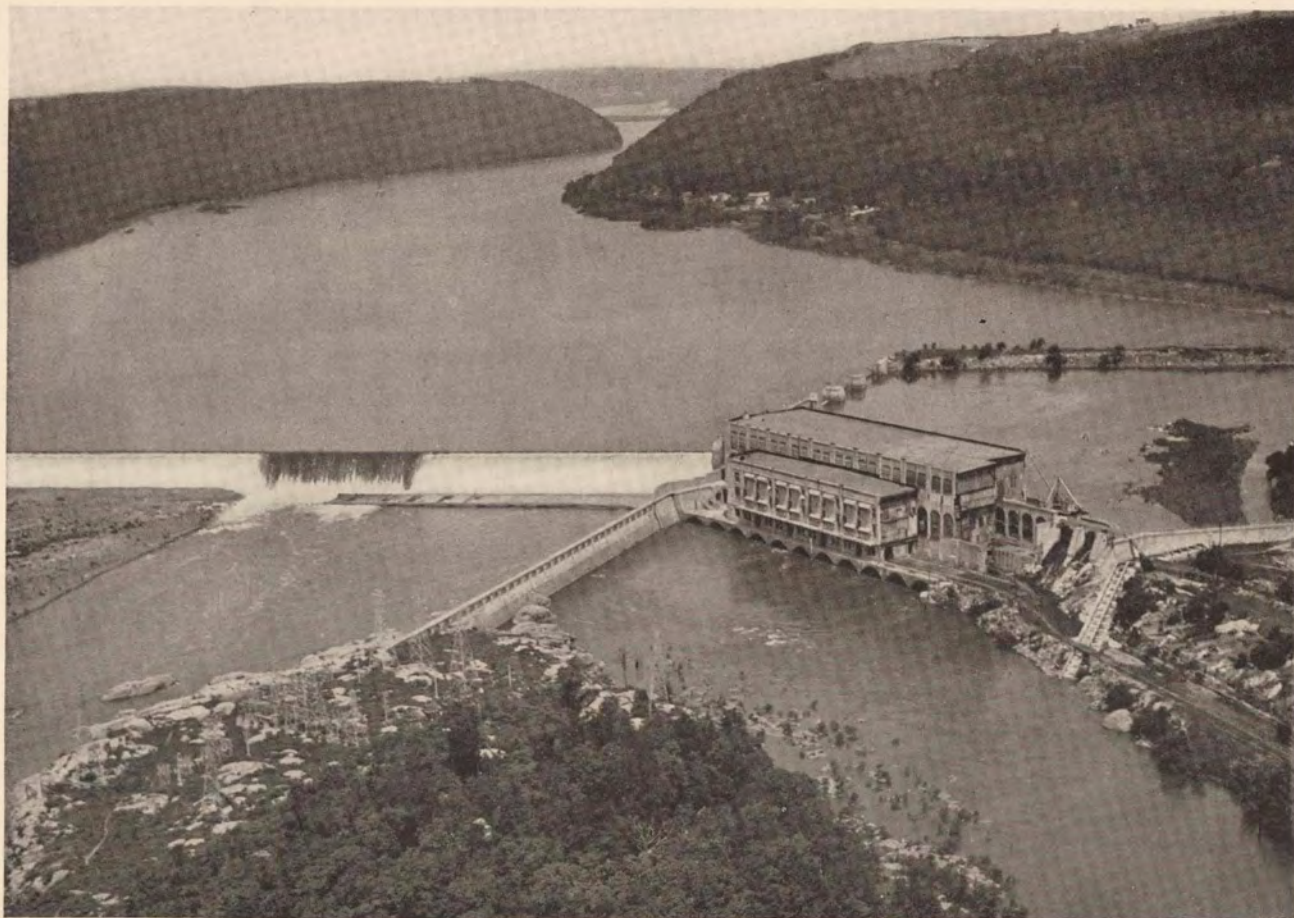


Old Retort House—Holliday St. Works.



WESTPORT POWER PLANT OF THE CONSOLIDATED GAS ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY OF BALTIMORE

The Consolidated Company is completing a 53,333 horsepower extension to its steam-driven power plant at Westport, bringing the capacity of this plant to 220,000 horsepower. Westport is the largest electric power plant south of Philadelphia and one of the most efficient in America. It is located on a tract of 14 acres of fast land with rail and deep water facilities. There are 46 buildings and structures on the property.



THE HYDRO-ELECTRIC PLANT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA WATER & POWER COMPANY AT HOLTWOOD, PA.

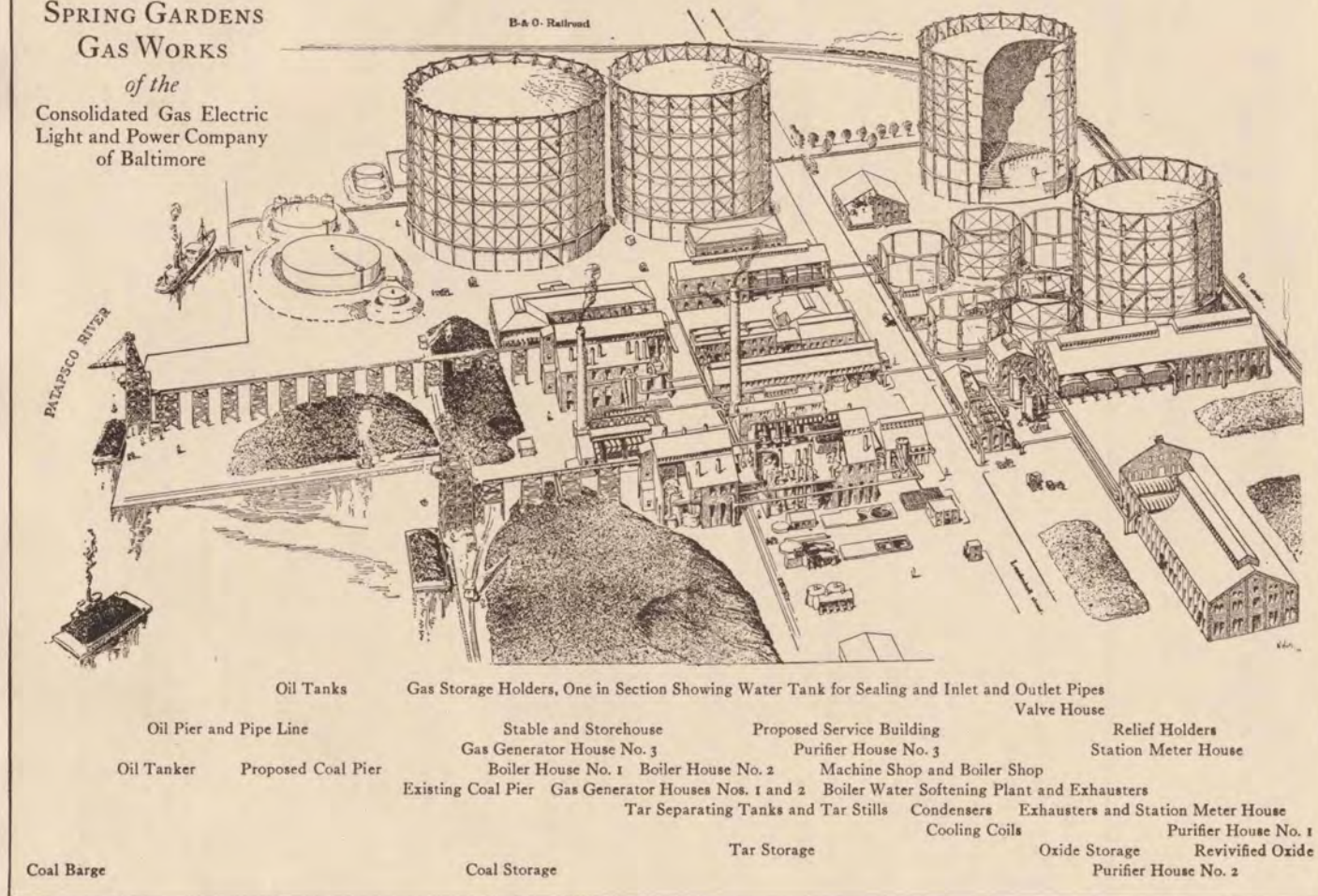
A large part of the electricity distributed by the Consolidated Company is generated by the Pennsylvania Water and Power Company at its development on the Susquehanna River at Holtwood, Pa. Baltimore has enjoyed the advantages of power from this source since 1910. During 1924 the capacity of the hydro-electric plant was increased by 40,000 h.p., giving a total generating capacity of 150,000 h.p. This is the largest hydro-electric plant south of Niagara and east of the Mississippi.

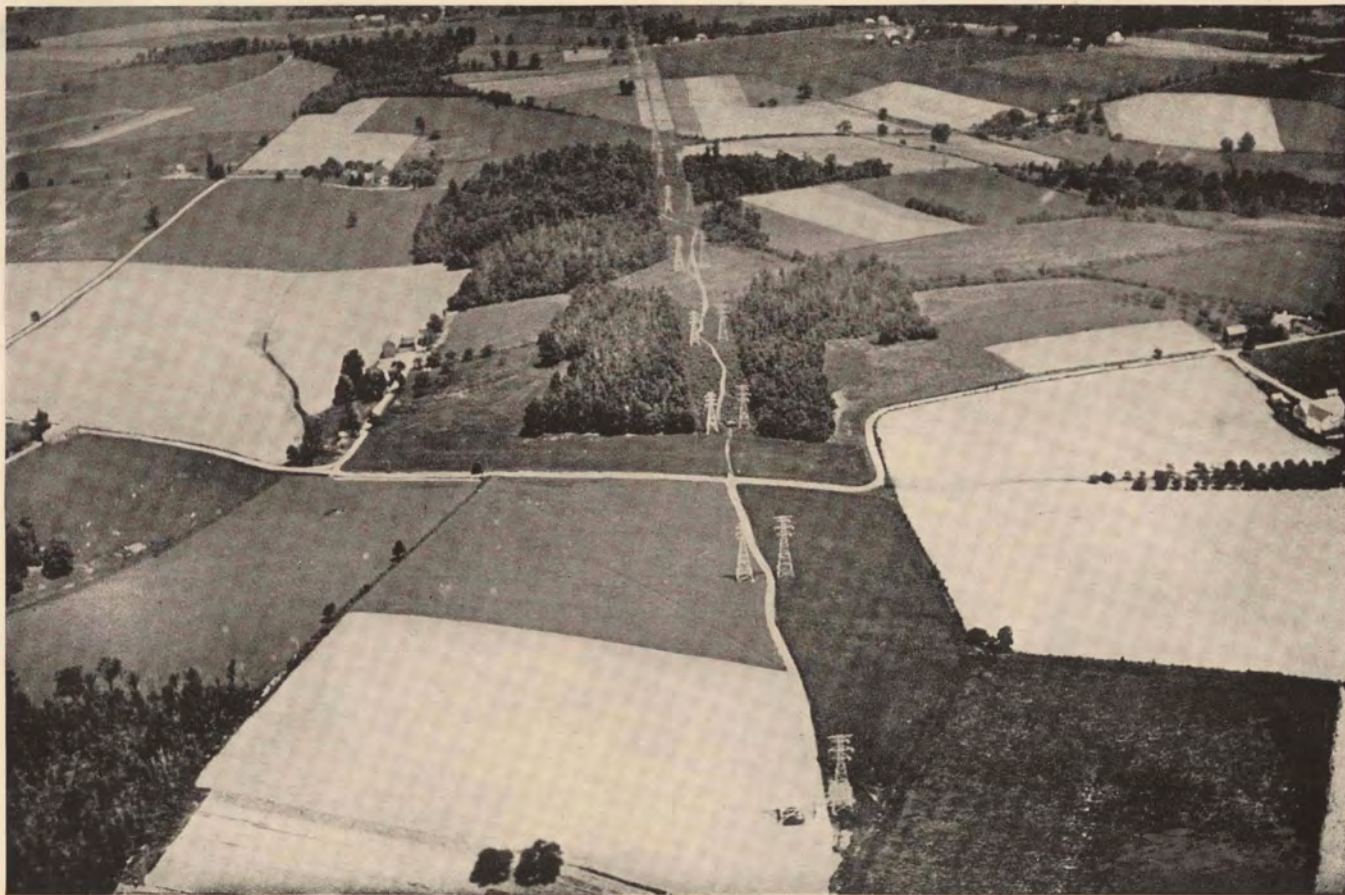


SPRING GARDENS GAS WORKS OF THE CONSOLIDATED GAS ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY OF BALTIMORE
All of the gas used in Baltimore is distributed from this plant, which covers 57 acres. It is one of the largest and most modern gas plants in America.

SPRING GARDENS GAS WORKS

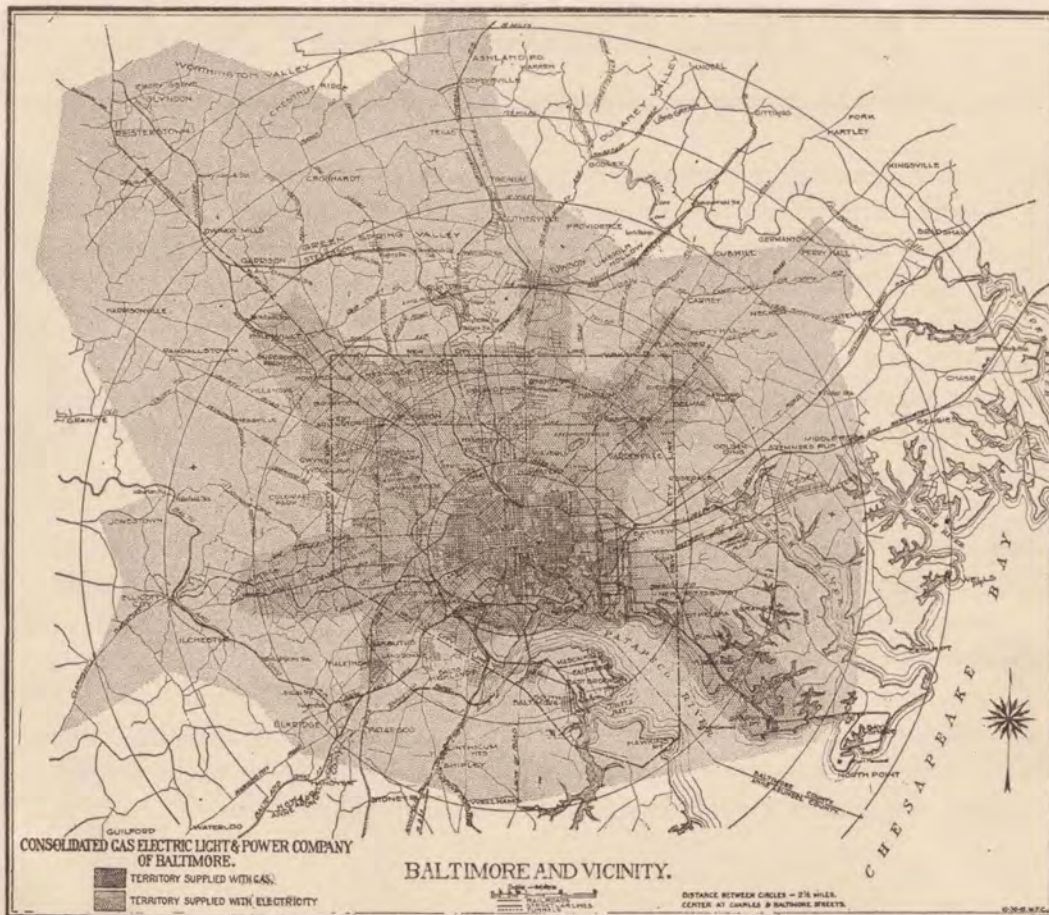
of the
Consolidated Gas Electric
Light and Power Company
of Baltimore



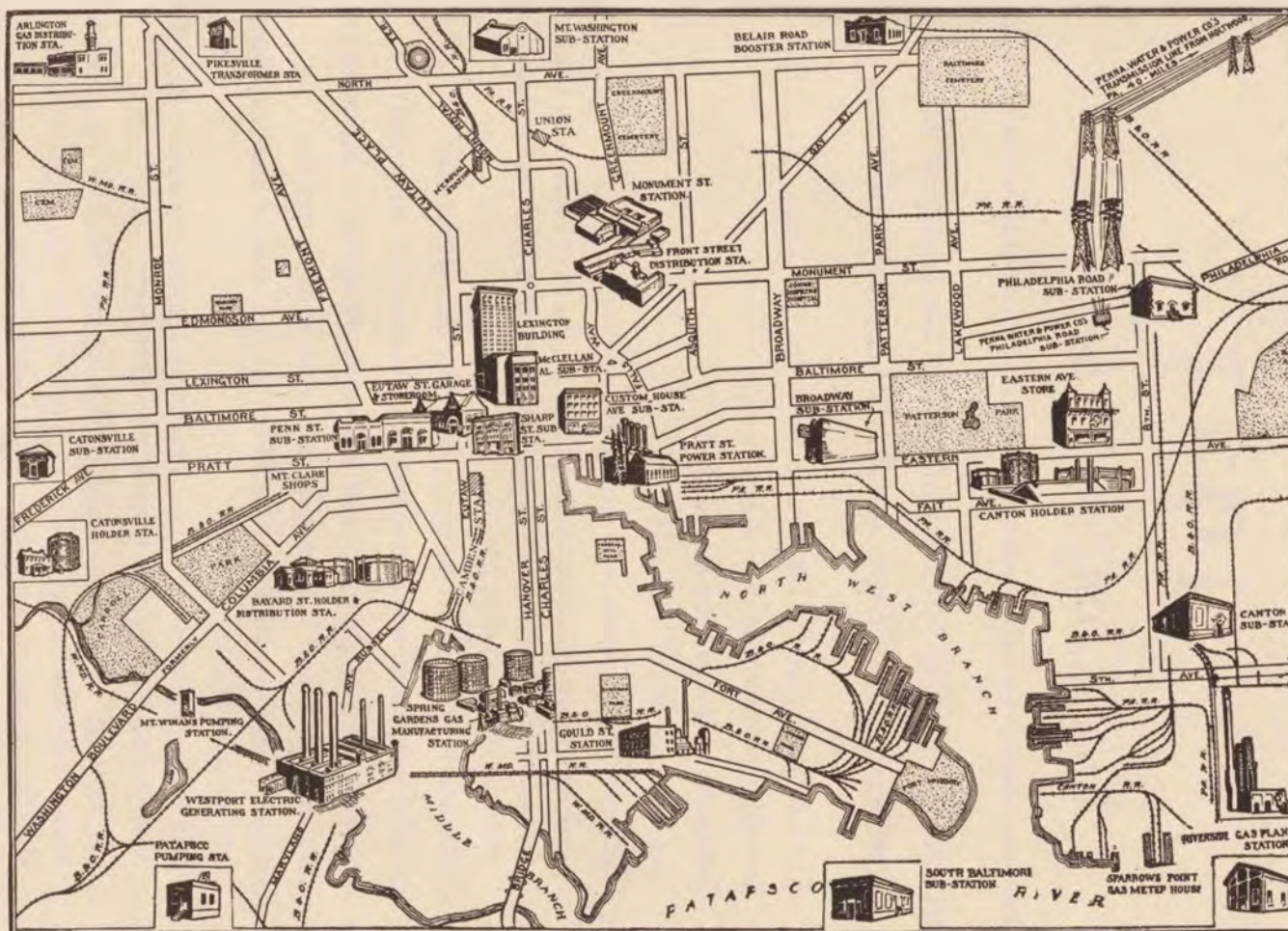


AIRPLANE VIEW OF THE HIGH TENSION CROSS-COUNTRY TRANSMISSION LINES FROM HOLTWOOD TO BALTIMORE

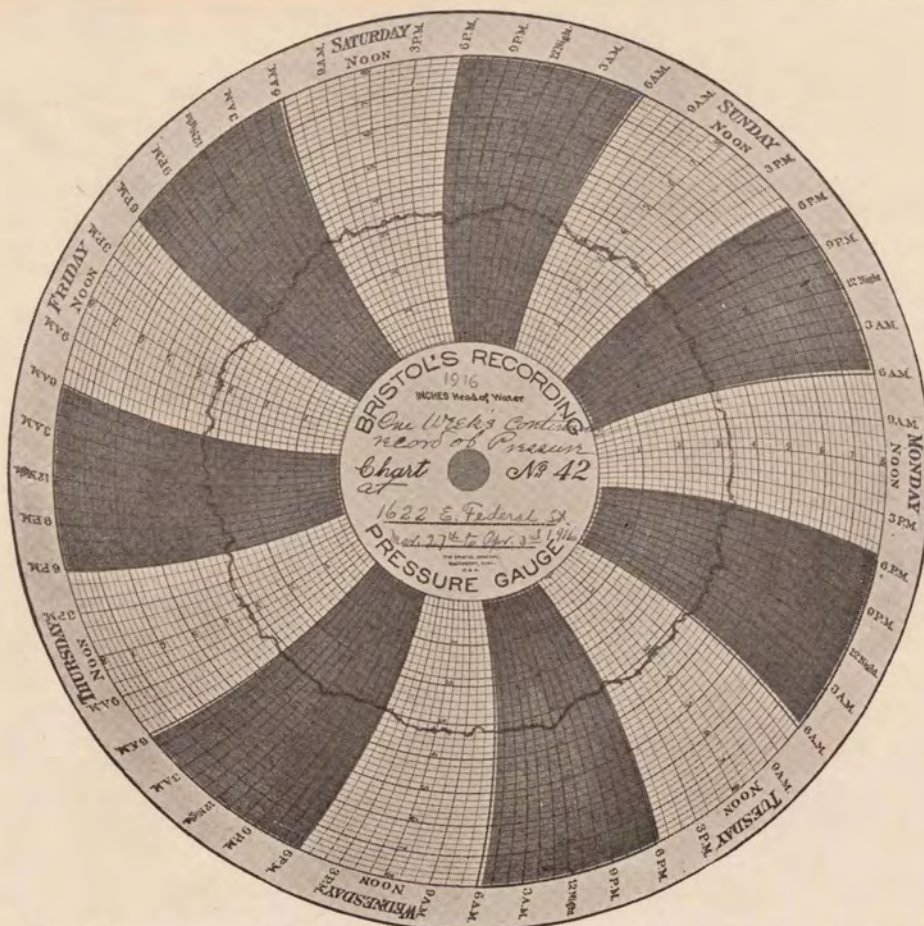
Twelve aluminum wires suspended from a double line of steel towers spaced about 500 feet apart transmit power to Baltimore, a distance of 40 miles, at 70,000 volts, or about 600 times the voltage of the electric current in your home. At Baltimore the pressure is stepped down to 13,200 volts by transformers in the Highlandtown Sub-station of the Pennsylvania Water & Power Company and the power is delivered to The Consolidated Company for distribution throughout the city.



A MAP OF THE TERRITORY SERVED WITH ELECTRICITY AND GAS BY THE
CONSOLIDATED GAS ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY
OF BALTIMORE



MAP OF BALTIMORE WITH MINIATURE ELEVATIONS OF COMPANY'S PRINCIPAL STATIONS



WEEKLY PRESSURE CHART—March 27 to April 3, 1916, showing uniform pressure maintained about 4 miles from works

From the Federal Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser

Wednesday, June 19, 1816

AN ORDINANCE

To provide for more effectually lighting the streets, squares, lanes and alleys of the city of Ashmore.

Whereas it is represented to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, by *Reuben M. Prentiss*, on behalf of himself and others, who have organized and formed a company by the name of "The *Gas Light and Coke Company*" of this State, that they are willing to light the streets, squares, lanes and alleys of this city, by more efficient manner, and with more safety, economy and less waste, by means of Gas burned and Hydrogen Gas, than they have heretofore been lighted by means of oil, and in saving any increased expense to the city for lighting the same extent of streets or squares, than they have been lighted by means of oil; and whereas the Mayor may be authorized to pray, that the said company be authorized to lay pipes, to be authorized to lay pipes for the purpose of conveying the Gas along and under the streets, squares, lanes and alleys of this city, and the City Council being desirous of giving the said company reasonable assistance to promote the laudable aims of the said company, and of having the city lighted in the most efficient manner, which the said company is willing to accept, that objection will accompany: That the Mayor

City enacted and ordained by the Maryland City Council of Baltimore, That it shall and may be lawful for "The Gas Light Company of Baltimore" aforesaid, and they are hereby authorized and empowered, that they may and lawfully may, cause to be laid along and under their streets, squares, lanes and alleys of the city, paved or unpaved, such and so many pipes as may be necessary to convey the Gas from their manufactories or manufactories of the city to the places where the same shall be used, and they may and lawfully may, lay and carry on within the city, with special permission be revoked, to and along any street, square, lane or alley which they shall propose to light, and they may and lawfully may, lay and carry on under any place belonging to any individual or company adjacent to any such street, square, lane or alley, in or along which the said pipes shall be so laid, and the same from time to time to repair or alter, or to change, or to remove or displace any pipe or pipes laid or to be laid by the Baltimore Water Company for the purpose of conveying water into or through any building, or to alter, or to change, or to remove or displace any pipe or pipes laid or to be laid by "The Gas Light Company of Baltimore" aforesaid, shall, immediately after laying, repairing or removing any pipe or pipes aforesaid in any street, square, lane or alley, or in or along any such place, be required by the City Commissioners, caused to be filled up, repaired and repaved, at their own expense every such street, or part of a street, square, lane or alley, as the said pipes shall be laid, or removed, or altered, or repaired, or improved, for the purpose of altering, laying or removing any pipe or pipes aforesaid, and if the said company shall omit or neglect to fill up, repair or repave any such street, or part of a street, square, lane or alley, or in or along any such place, or if they shall omit or neglect to remove and take away any dirt or rubbish which may remain after the laying, altering or removing such pipe or pipes, or after filling up, repairing or repaving in any such time which shall be limited by the city commissioners in their notice for that purpose, the said company shall for every such omission or neglect forfeit and pay to the use of the city, such sum not exceeding \$100, as shall be determined by the Circuit Court of Baltimore county shall adjudge, on a warrant to be issued in the name of the mayor and city council of Baltimore against the President or other known officers of the said company, and they are hereby authorized and empowered, that they may and lawfully may, cause to be laid in any street, square, lane or alley, or in or along any such place, after the laying

any warrant by a justice of the peace for the recovery of the said penalty of Twenty-dollar.

Sec. 2d. And be it enacted and ordained that the said company shall be subject to all the penalties provided for by the provisions of the ordinance entitled "an ordinance to encourage the repair and repaving of the streets of the city of New Orleans," and of the several provisions of the said ordinance, so far as the same can within the intent and meaning of this ordinance be rendered applicable to the said company, and so far as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance, the said company shall be particularly subjected to the provisions of the said ordinance and supplements also and respecting the repairing and repaving the street, lanes and alleys through which the Gas may be conveyed, and the said company shall be liable for the laying or repaving the same, or for the repairing the same by the company of each street, lane or alley as may be insufficiently repaired, or prove defective within six months from the date of being repaired, and that the said penalties and other provisions of the said ordinance and supplements shall be enforced from the President or other chief officer of the said company before any justice of the peace in the mode herein before prescribed - and direct

Sec. 34. And be it enacted and ordained, that if any person shall unpair, obstruct, displace or injure any pump or any part of the machinery which shall be used or employed by the said company in manufacturing, conducting or conveying the said Gas, or in any way impede or retard or occasion or cause a waste of the said Gas, he or she shall for every such offence forfeit and pay such sum not exceeding twenty dollars as the justice of the peace shall adjudge, one half to the use of the informant, and the other half to the use of the city, and such person shall also be liable to pay damages for the injury which he or she may have caused.

company which the said company may sustain. And be it enacted and ordained, That the Mayor and Council be authorized to contract with the said *Beach and Paine*, and the other members of "The Gas Light Company of Baltimore" or with the agent or officer of the said Company duly authorized for that purpose, to light the whole of the streets, squares, lanes and alleys of this city, or from any part thereof, for the lighting of any one street, or part of the same, on such terms and conditions as the Mayor shall appear reasonable: provided that no such contract shall be made for a longer period than one year, and also that the actual cost or expense of lighting the city by use of any such contract shall not exceed the expense of the same by the city for the same purpose, and the Mayor is hereby authorized to pledge the faith of the city that any contract or contracts made by him with the said company or companies shall be binding and shall continue in force as long as the said company shall continue to light the city with as much economy, safety and as effectually as the same can or could be lighted by means of oil, or by any other company which may be established, or which may be established, and no longer than always that the Mayor and Council of Baltimore reserve to themselves the right of annulling any such contract, and also of annulling and withdrawing any or all of the privileges granted by this Ordinance, if it shall at any time hereafter appear to the said Mayor and Council that the same are not being

harm the health or endangers the property of the citizens in a greater degree than the use of oil for the same purpose.

Sec. 3. And be Remanded and ordained, that the Gas Light Company of Baltimore aforesaid may and they are hereby authorized with the approbation of the Mayor and the consent of the owners or occupiers of houses fronting on or adjacent to any street, square, lane or alley, to attach the lamps, pipes or other apparatus to be used or necessary for lighting any such street, square, lane or alley, to any part of any such house or houses, on such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon by and between the said Company and the owner or occupiers of such house or houses.

WM. PATTERSON,
President of the 1st. Branch of the C. Council.
HENRY PAYSON,
President of the 2d. Branch of the C. Council.
Appointed 19th June, 1866.
EDWARD JOHNSON, Mayor.
June 19

GAS LIGHT.



*The Petapasco Manufacturing
Company,*

At their Warehouse, No. 243, Market-street,
Have constantly for sale, a very general as-
sortment of

COTTON YARN,
both Chain and Filling of every number from
5 to 20.

Also, SEWING THREAD, white and of all the usual colours in hoags and skeins, and Fine and Stocking Thread; manufactured at their Mill on the Parapara, which will be found to be of the same excellent quality as heretofore.

They have also for sale a general assortment of 7, 8, 9 and 10 hundred Stn Gages, Drillings and Box-Drillings, made of the yarn from their factory—All which will be disposed of on the most reasonable terms.

EDWARD GRAY, President.

A Donation Wanted

1900-1901

From the files of the Federal Gazette in possession of the Maryland Historical Society

Fac-Simile of advertisement of the 1816 ordinance granting a franchise to the Gas Light Company of Baltimore and of Rembrandt Peale's advertisement of the display of gas lighting at his Museum.

CONSOLIDATED GAS ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY
OF BALTIMORE

ANNUAL EXTENSIONS
OF THE COMPANY'S PROPERTY

Years 1910 to 1927 Inclusive

1910	. . . . .	\$854,654.26
1911	. . . . .	945,607.64
1912	. . . . .	1,823,884.78
1913	. . . . .	1,548,610.45
1914	. . . . .	1,675,464.42
1915	. . . . .	856,509.04
1916	. . . . .	1,855,208.46
1917	. . . . .	3,785,483.43
1918	. . . . .	3,734,701.79
1919	. . . . .	4,752,714.40
1920	. . . . .	4,198,946.99
1921	. . . . .	*7,699,046.70
1922	. . . . .	2,150,051.75
1923	. . . . .	5,243,707.94
1924	. . . . .	6,313,233.44
1925	. . . . .	3,744,688.82
1926	. . . . .	5,883,948.66
1927 (Budget)	. . . . .	5,756,803.41
Total	. . . . .	\$62,823,266.38

* Includes purchase of Power Plant of Street Railways Company.